

July 2020

Department of Water Resources | California's Groundwater (Bulletin 118)
Frequently Asked Questions

What is California's Groundwater?

California's Groundwater is an inventory and assessment of available information on the occurrence, nature, and state of California's groundwater to inform decisions affecting the protection, use, and management of the resource. It defines California's groundwater basin boundaries and provides the status of groundwater management; describes groundwater conditions, monitoring efforts, and patterns of groundwater extraction in those basins; assigns basin priority; and identifies basins subject to critical conditions of overdraft. A companion website is maintained at the link below and is periodically updated with relevant information.

<https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118>

Why is California's Groundwater being updated?

The last comprehensive update was published in 2003, although an Interim Update, addressing a limited number of issues important for SGMA implementation, was published in 2016. Much has changed in relation to water management in California since the 2003 update, including a five-year drought which began in 2012 and the passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014.

The California Water Code (Section 12924) requires DWR to investigate the state's groundwater basins and report findings in years ending in "5 and 0."

What is in the Update 2020?

California's Groundwater Update 2020 will build on the expanded content of the of DWR's 2013 Water Plan - 2013 Groundwater Report, which at the time was the most comprehensive report on the State's groundwater. It will also be a transitional document that will lead to the 2025 Update with comprehensive information received from the Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) through their SGMA implementation activities.

The Department of Water Resources is coordinating the development of Update 2020 with other federal, State and local agencies. This update will include comprehensive information on the occurrence and characteristics of groundwater in California including groundwater basin boundaries, which was last updated in 2018, hydrologic and geologic characteristics of the individual hydrologic regions, and general information on groundwater quality conditions. The 2020 update will also include available new information on groundwater management.

The report is organized as follows:

- Introduction to California's Groundwater
- Groundwater in California
- California's Water Use

- California's Groundwater Management
- California's Groundwater Monitoring
- California's Groundwater Conditions
- Hydrologic Region Summaries

The update will also include opportunities for the future, such as recommendations for knowledge and technology gaps that impede understanding and sustainable management, management recommendations, and recommendations for California's Groundwater Update 2025.

How can I be involved in the 2020 Update process?

The California's Groundwater website is host to a variety of information regarding the development of the Update 2020. There will also be public meetings or webinars that will be available for you to attend in Fall 2020. Please visit us at <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118> to stay current on next steps, upcoming meetings, and other new information.

There is also an open public survey to provide preliminary feedback to DWR regarding use of Bulletin 118 historically and needs for the B118 in the future. The survey can be opened at this link: <https://survey.sogosurvey.com/r/yhNnaz>.

What is the history of California's Groundwater (Bulletin 118)?

The publication history of statewide editions of California's Groundwater is presented below. A more detailed timeline is available at <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118>

- 1952: In 1952, the State of California issued a report on the water quality of groundwater basins in the state. This was the first formal report to describe how the basins were defined, and to create a uniform name and numbering system for the basins in California. The publication was not an official California's Groundwater report (Bulletin 118), but subsequent reports utilized and expanded on this information.
- 1975: The first official California's Groundwater report summarized the technical information available for groundwater basins and identified use/misuse of basins with recommendations on how basins could be better managed in the future.
- 1980: This update identified the State's groundwater on the basis of geological and hydrological conditions with consideration of political boundary lines whenever practical. This report also contained existing general patterns of groundwater pumping and groundwater recharge to identify basins subject to critical conditions of overdraft.
- 2003: The most recent comprehensive update describes California's groundwater basins and sub-basins, including basin boundaries, hydrologic and hydrogeologic summaries, groundwater storage capacity and water budget, groundwater level and quality trends, well yields, basin management and references.

- 2013: California Water Plan Enhanced Groundwater Content, Standalone Report. Not an official update but the report provided the most detailed statewide and regional groundwater information since 2003 and is expected to serve as the foundation from which California's Groundwater Update 2020 and future reports will be built from.
- 2016: An interim update was published and includes critically overdrafted basin designations and basin boundary revisions, information important to implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Additionally, a new procedure for basin descriptions was developed as part of the basin boundary modification process. All basins with boundary modifications in 2016 have revised basin boundary descriptions that replace their 2003 descriptions.

What is happening with the Basin Reports?

Descriptions of each of the 515 groundwater basins in California were developed for the 2003 update. The descriptions include the definition of the legal basin boundary, the hydrologic setting of the basin, hydrogeologic information about the basin including lithology; storage; and transmissivity, groundwater management efforts within the basins, and water quality conditions. Due to the amount of information contained within the basin descriptions, they were made available for download on the B-118 web site. Some of the information in the basin descriptions is outdated or no longer relevant. Therefore, DWR intends to update the individual basin descriptions with more recent information and data, including what is received from GSAs in their GSPs, annual reports, and other submitted SGMA implementation data. These updated basin descriptions will be known as basin reports to more accurately define the basin descriptions and conditions described within. Updating all 515 basin reports is expected to take 8 to 10 years, and they will be updated based on basin priority, from high to low.

What is planned for the California's Groundwater website?

The current web site will be referred to as California's Groundwater website and will continue to serve multiple purposes. Links to historical B-118 documents and the current California's Groundwater Update will be made available for download. Links to basin reports will also be maintained, as well as archived basin descriptions. The GIS dataset for basin boundaries will also continue to be available. In addition, information and data will be made available through the web site on a basis more frequent than the 5-year report intervals, so that the web site might serve as a "living" document to provide up-to-date available information related to groundwater in California. To complement this concept, a California's Groundwater data viewer will be made available to interactively view spatial data sets associated with the Update. Changes will be implemented as California's Groundwater Update 2020 is published.